CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE GREAT CHAMBER OF BOSTON MANOR-HOUSE, BRENTFORD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BUILDER.

SIR,—I need not inform you that in the olden time richly-decorative fire-places, composed of marble, stone, or wood, or of all these materials combined, were for centuries universal throughout Europe; they formed the principal feature in the apartments of the wealthy, were generally in two stories, ornamented with the arms of the sovereign, as well as those appertaining to their haughty possessors; scriptural and profane subjects, devices, monograms in endless variety, served to adorn these favourite centres of domestic intercourse. The appearance of chimney-glasses, and the introduction of coal as fuel, caused the disuse of these fire-places in England, while the iron close-stove banished them from Germany. We have still remaining fine examples of the Gothic style, and of the transition period, and the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, we have immense numbers. Of the fire-places of the latter class, those that approach nearest their Italian original, are wholly without that barbarous taste and rude execution, which are seen in the greatest number; but in the whole of them no admixture whatever of the Gothic style is to be found.

The ancient fire-place at Boston House, which the accompanying sketches illustrate, is a good example of the picturesque grandeur belonging to this class; but it is not without some of that grotesqueness which has caused the style to be so much censured. As the engraving is to a large scale, it will not be necessary to describe it, except to remark that the scroll ornaments surrounding the oval compartment in the centre appear to be copied from a small book of German designs of a similar character, by P. HIERVS, some plates of which are in my possession.

Boston House is a plain brick structure with three gabels in its principal front; it is chiefly remarkable for the richly-ornamented ceilings within. The great chamber on the first floor, or, in the language of the New Metropolitan Building-Act, the third floor, is 40 feet in length by 20 in breadth; the ceiling of it is composed of thirty-seven richly-decorated panels containing personifications of the five senses, the four elements, the three Christian Graces—Faith, Hope, and Charity, War and Peace, Peace and Plenty, the whole in the boldest relief, and not three parts of the decoration alike; small pendants drop at the intersection of the ribs. Leading out of this room is the state bed-chamber containing a superb bed of the reign of Queen Anne. The ceiling of this room is as rich as that of the great chamber, but of different design; plates of both these ceilings have been published.

The building was erected by Lady Reade who then held the manor, in the year 1622; her initials M. R., and the date 1623, are on the ceiling. The house was altered and repaired in 1671 by James Clitherow, Esq.,